

KEEPER
OF THE
LOST CITIES
UNLOCKED
BOOK 8.5

SHANNON MESSENGER

SIMON & SCHUSTER



Dear amazing Keeper readers,

I know you're probably thinking, *Okay, what exactly is this book that I'm about to read?* And the answer is: *something extra special, designed to be read between Legacy (Book 8) and the currently still untitled Book 9* (hence why we're calling this "8.5"). So that means I need to start things off with a great big **SPOILER ALERT**.

**IF YOU HAVEN'T READ THE OTHER EIGHT
KEEPER BOOKS—AND DON'T WANT TO HAVE
ANY SECRETS SPOILED FOR YOU—STEP AWAY
UNTIL YOU'RE CAUGHT UP!**

(**Hint:** that means you'll want to have read *Keeper of the Lost Cities*, *Exile*, *Everblaze*, *Neverseen*, *Lodestar*, *Nightfall*, *Flashback*, and *Legacy*—in that order—before reading this!)

The reason there are spoilers is because the first half of this book is a special kind of series guide, filled with details about your favorite Keeper characters and the world of the Lost Cities—plus new tidbits and information you won't find anywhere else! You'll also discover fun bonuses, like the gorgeous map of the Lost Cities, Keeper-themed quizzes and recipes, an Iggy coloring page, and *tons* of seriously amazing art—some of which comes with Keefe commentary!





And after all of that awesomeness, you'll find a 236-page exclusive Keeper novella, continuing the main story of the series from the end of *Legacy*—but I'll explain more about that when you get there.

For now, settle in for a super-fun look behind the scenes of the Keeper books—and remember to keep an eye out for those exclusive secrets!

HAPPY READING!

xo



KEEPER
OF THE
LOST CITIES
UNLOCKED
BOOK 8.5



The Registry





AUTHOR'S NOTE

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS SOPHIE'S GIVEN AFTER Fitz brings her to the Lost Cities is a registry pendant—a simple choker-style necklace containing a special crystal that allows the Council to monitor her whereabouts. I wrote that detail into the series because it felt logical that a world in which anyone can travel all over the planet on a beam of light (and where light leaping can go tragically wrong) would have safety precautions in place to allow someone to be found in an emergency.

But the Council uses the pendants for more than simply tracking a person's location. In fact, the registry keeps files on everyone in the Lost Cities, monitoring all kinds of different things. (That's why members of the Black Swan and the Neverseen sometimes alter their feeds to hide what they're up to.)

So, I thought it might be fun to give you guys a peek at your favorite characters' registry files. I have a feeling you'll be surprised by some of the details you discover in them! And remember—these are the *Council's* official records, so there may be times when *you* know things that *they* haven't figured out yet. Don't let that confuse you—just enjoy being smarter than the leaders of the elvin world. ☺

(*whispers* You might also notice that certain files have been edited, both by the registry and by a certain powerful Technopath—and some files can't be accessed at all. . . . The elves have tricky security!)



SHANNON MESSENGER 3



WARNING:

You are accessing CLASSIFIED
Registry files. Unauthorized viewing
is punishable by Tribunal.





REGISTRY FILE FOR
Sophie Elizabeth Foster



KNOWN ABILITIES: *Telepath, Polyglot, Inflictor, Teleporter, Enhancer*

RESIDENCE: *Havenfield*

IMMEDIATE FAMILY: *Unknown*

ADOPTED BY: *Grady and Edaline Ruewen*

MATCH STATUS: *Unmatchable*

EDUCATION: *Current Foxfire prodigy*

NEXUS: *No longer required*

PATHFINDER: *Not assigned. Restricted to Leapmasters and home crystals.*

SPYBALL APPROVAL: *None*

MEMBER OF THE NOBILITY: *Yes*

SHANNON MESSENGER 7

TITLE: *Lady*

NOBLE ASSIGNMENT: *Regent; leader of Team Valiant; point of contact for the alicorns*

SIGNIFICANT CONNECTIONS: *Cognate to Fitz Vacker; fealty-sworn member of the Black Swan; human family under the protection of the Council; former Wayward at Exillium*

ASSIGNED BODYGUARD(S): *Sandor (goblin); Flori (gnome); Bo (ogre—temporarily reassigned); Tarina (troll—indefinitely on leave); Nubiti (dwarf—indefinitely on leave)*

A CHILD OF UNTRADITIONAL ORIGINS:

In what was hopefully a first (and last) for our world, Sophie was born and raised by two humans (formerly known as Will and Emma Foster, relocated once as Connor and Kate Freeman, and again as [REDACTED FOR SECURITY] in an area of the Forbidden Cities that the humans call San Diego, California. She had one human sibling (Amy Foster, relocated once as Natalie Freeman, and again as [REDACTED FOR SECURITY], who was briefly a resident of the Lost Cities and was allowed to retain her memories of that time. But there is no genetic connection between Sophie and her human sister, or between Sophie and her human parents. Sophie's embryo was created from the genetic materials of two unknown elves and implanted into her human mother by a member of the Black Swan who goes by the false name Mr. Forkle. He posed as both a human fertility doctor and a neighbor in order to monitor Sophie's development, as well as her safety. He is also presumed to be responsible for triggering her telepathy at the age of five human years, as well as planting classified information into her memory, and revealing

her location to Alden Vacker when she was twelve human years old. The possibility of Sophie's existence was first discovered by Quinlin Sonden and Alden Vacker after the term "Project Moonlark" and a strand of unregistered elvin DNA were recovered during a memory break performed on Prentice Endal—though the Council believed the evidence to be an elaborate hoax. Alden spent years secretly searching the Forbidden Cities for the girl (often with the help of his sons, Alvar Vacker and Fitz Vacker) before finally receiving a human newspaper article that led him to Sophie. Fitz Vacker brought her to the Lost Cities and explained the truth about who and what she was, and also revealed that she would need to leave her human life behind. She was given access to a birth fund, a registry pendant, a nexus, and an Imparter—plus numerous other basic necessities. Later she was given a home crystal to Havenfield. Sophie's residency was provisional at first, but she has since been granted full citizenship and continues to attend Foxfire Academy.

UNEXPECTED EYE COLOR:

Sophie has brown eyes (with small flecks of gold in them) instead of a shade of blue, like the rest of our species. No one, including her creators, seems to be 100 percent clear as to why—though most suspect the condition is related to certain modifications made to her genetics during the Black Swan's experiments, many of which were based on alicorn DNA.

A STRANGE HABIT:

In what appears to be a nervous tic of sorts, Sophie is often seen tugging on her eyelashes. She's been quick to assure everyone that

it doesn't hurt, but she does often appear to be trying to break herself of the habit. So far, she's had little success. And it's hard to blame Sophie for that, given the numerous stressful things she's been through—and continues to endure.

AN UNUSUAL REQUEST:

Originally the Council ordered that Sophie's human identity be "terminated" and that her human family be made to believe that their eldest daughter had passed away. But Sophie was concerned about the emotional toll her family would pay while grieving for their lost child, and she convinced Alden Vacker that her human identity should instead be "erased," with the humans relocated to someplace their memories wouldn't be triggered. Alden and Della Vacker oversaw the relocation, moving both parents, their daughter, and their pet (a large gray cat evidently named Marty) to a location with no ties to their previous lives. And Della was careful to ensure that their new lifestyle was what humans would classify as "very comfortable." Sophie had also specifically requested that her family's new home have a yard large enough for a dog, so Della gifted the family with a beagle puppy. Our records indicate that the dog has been named Watson.

POSSESSION OF HUMAN ITEMS:

Sophie brought one small purple backpack with her when she left the Forbidden Cities, and it was filled mostly with human clothing. The only other items were a scrapbook of family photos, a gadget called an iPod (which Dex Dizznee has made numerous adjustments to), and a bright blue elephant stuffed animal that she has named

Ella and apparently cannot sleep without. All other items from Sophie's human home were packed up and meticulously recorded before being stored in [ADDRESS REDACTED FOR SECURITY] in Mysterium, which Sophie has visited once with Councillor Terik in order to retrieve a childhood journal she'd left behind and realized was important. (Councillor Terik asked her why and was not given an answer.)

UNKNOWN POTENTIAL:

Sophie's unconventional upbringing—as well as numerous other suspicious circumstances—led the Council to order Councillor Terik to descry Sophie during her first year in the Lost Cities. Alden Vacker brought Sophie to Councillor Terik's private office in Eternalia, and she cooperated fully with the descrying. But the reading results were inconclusive. Councillor Terik reported afterward that he could definitely sense something *strong* when it came to Sophie's potential, but what that actually means remains unclear.

A COMPLICATED ADOPTION PROCESS:

Upon the discovery of Sophie's existence, Alden and Della Vacker applied to be her guardians—but their application was rejected because Alden's search for Sophie had not been authorized by the Council. Sophie was instead placed at Havenfield with Grady and Edaline Ruewen, and adoption proceedings were initiated shortly thereafter. But several months later, the Ruewens canceled the adoption, citing emotional distress due to their ongoing grief over losing their daughter (Jolie Ruewen) sixteen years earlier. Alden

and Della Vacker then renewed their application for guardianship, and the Council was willing to grant permission. But Sophie's kidnapping—and brief presumed death—ended the proceedings once again. After her rescue and recovery, both the Ruewens and Vackers applied for adoption. The Council opted to leave the decision to Sophie, who chose to permanently return to Havenfield with the Ruewens.

THE CONSTANT SHADOW OF GRIEF:

Finalizing her adoption was surely a relief for Sophie—but it was still only a “step” toward truly feeling like a family. A period of adjustment is expected in these situations, so it wasn't surprising that Sophie initially struggled to use terms like “Mom” and “Dad.” But for the Ruewen-Foster family (assuming that's what they call themselves), there was the added complication of the loss of Jolie. Reports indicate that Sophie initially worried that Grady and Edaline wished she were more like their lost daughter, and she tried to avoid the subject as much as possible. She evidently also tried to avoid Jolie's old bedroom, out of fear that she might not be allowed in there. But all of that changed when Sophie discovered that Jolie had been involved with the Black Swan.

A MIRROR THAT'S PERHAPS TOO HONEST:

Spectral mirrors are one of Lady Iskra's numerous inventions—and while they were quite popular when they first went on sale, many soon found their mirrors' style and fashion “advice” to be obnoxious (and at times even insulting). The gadgets have since become nearly obsolete, but it appears that Jolie Ruewen kept one

in her bedroom at Havenfield, and had even befriended Vertina (the tiny “girl” programmed to appear in the corner of the mirror). So when Sophie was looking to learn more about Grady and Edaline’s deceased daughter, she opted to move Vertina’s mirror to her bedroom—a decision she likely regrets at times, given Sophie’s general lack of interest in clothes and makeup. But reports indicate that Vertina has proven to be quite useful at times, even helping Sophie locate Jolie’s secret diary, which led Sophie to identify Jolie’s killer.

A MYSTERIOUS MIND:

Sophie has a powerful photographic memory, but it had two blank spots when she arrived in the Lost Cities—both connected to traumas in her childhood that led to her waking up in human hospitals (one when she was five human years old, and the other when she was nine human years old). Our investigation shows that both memories were erased by the Black Swan “for her protection” and have since been returned. Her mind also appears to be filled with numerous bits of information about the Lost Cities—much of which is highly classified (like the location of the unmapped stars)—which were planted as part of her “preparation” for her role as the moonlark. She also struggles to read words written in the primary runic alphabet because her mind has been trained to instinctively recognize them as the Black Swan’s cipher runes.

THE BLACK SWAN’S MOONLARK:

Details on the so-called “Project Moonlark” are still vague at best. But the secret—and highly illegal—genetic experiment was carried

out by the Black Swan and resulted in the creation of Sophie, who was designed with specific abilities in an attempt to make her a valuable asset against a rival band of rebels now known as the Neverseen. She was also raised with no awareness of who she was or where she belonged in order to give her a unique perspective on the Lost Cities. And she was hidden among humans, both to keep her safe until her abilities manifested, and also to provide her with a different level of insight into the human species—perhaps to someday help determine how to resolve the problems arising from humankind’s destructive behavior. Many suspect that some larger purpose for the moonlark still has yet to be revealed. Only time will tell—assuming Sophie continues to survive the numerous attempts on her life.

A GIRL OF MANY TALENTS:

Sophie is the only elf to manifest five special abilities—and it’s unclear whether she will continue to manifest any others. She’s the youngest elf on record to manifest, becoming a Telepath when she was only five human years old. The ability was triggered by the mysterious Mr. Forkle, who also triggered her inflicting and Polyglot abilities after rescuing Sophie and Dex Dizznee from their kidnappers. (He let Sophie and Dex make their own way back to the Lost Cities in order to keep his identity hidden, and presumably triggered the new abilities to help her through that challenge.) Mr. Forkle additionally triggered Sophie’s enhancing after she chose to accept the talent. But Sophie’s teleporting triggered on its own, possibly from the adrenaline of nearly plummeting to her death.

GREAT POWER, STRUGGLE, AND RESPONSIBILITY:

Sophie's telepathy was a burden for her as a child, often exposing her to harsh or hurtful things and causing headaches because she did not know how to shield her mind from the constant bombardment of human thoughts. She also had to hide the ability, because humans would have either doubted her or studied her—or both. And when she moved to the Lost Cities, her problems amplified. Sophie has faced suspicion, judgment, and gossip because of her past, and because of the strength and abundance of her abilities—all of which became worse after Sophie made several missteps in regards to the rules of telepathy, including attempting to cheat on her Level Two alchemy midterm and illegally invading King Dimitar's mind. Her telekinesis also proved somewhat unwieldy when tested by Councillor Bronte during her Foxfire qualification exam—and there was a very suspicious incident involving Fitz Vacker during Foxfire's Ultimate Splotching Championship. After Sophie nearly faded away, her abilities also began to malfunction, requiring a dangerous “reset” performed by the Black Swan. She needed a second “reset” later, for further refinement to her inflicting. And initially, her teleporting required her to jump from dangerously high places in the hope that the momentum would help her slip into the void before the fall killed her. Despite those challenges, Sophie's abilities and skills are, in short, *incredible*—even with her lack of proper training and practice. Her unique telepathy allows her to transmit astoundingly long distances, track the thoughts of others to their precise locations, communicate with animals, and heal broken minds. She can also slip past anyone's mental blocking, while her own mental

shields remain nearly impenetrable. (Reports indicate that only Fitz Vacker, Mr. Forkle, and the alicorns have ever been able to bypass her guard.) As if all of that weren't impressive enough, she has now become Cognates with Fitz Vacker, and when the two of them work together, they're able to accomplish numerous feats that many would consider to be impossible. Her inflicting has been somewhat less reliable—though the recent reset has given her significantly better control. She's also proven that negative *and* positive emotions can be inflicted—something previously unknown to her inflicting Mentor (Councillor Bronte). And while her linguistics Mentor (Lady Cadence) finds Sophie's mimicking to be seriously lacking, she has noted that Sophie's grasp of languages and pronunciation is flawless. Enhancing is Sophie's newest ability, and another talent that she has recently learned to master. Thanks to the guidance of Councillor Oralie, Sophie no longer requires gloves—or the special gadgets the Black Swan's mysterious Technopath designed for her—in order to “switch off” the ability. And Sophie's teleporting, which already allows her to go nearly everywhere she desires without needing a leaping crystal, recently became much stronger. Reports indicate that she can now reach the void by simply running, without needing a falling sensation first.

AN UNEVEN PRODIGY PERFORMANCE:

Despite being an “advanced student” in human schools (Sophie's human education records indicate that she was considered “years ahead” of her other classmates), Sophie has struggled with many of her sessions at Foxfire. Particularly challenging subjects include

PE, elementalism, and alchemy—the last being a session she didn't technically pass. (Her Mentor's notes list numerous fires and explosions.) In fact, Sophie was only able to advance to Level Three because the Council agreed to replace alchemy with an inflicting session mentored by Councillor Bronte. A linguistics session was also added to her Level Three schedule in light of Sophie manifesting as a Polyglot, and Lady Cadence was brought back to the Lost Cities (somewhat unwillingly) to be Sophie's Mentor. Both new ability sessions required giving Sophie access to the Silver Tower—something that has never been granted to a Level Three before. And Sophie does excel at her telepathy session (mentored by Sir Tiergan and now including Fitz Vacker) and her elvin history and Universe sessions, where her photographic memory works in her favor. She's also done fairly well at making friends and generally adapting to her new environment—though she *has* ended up in detention a significant number of times. It should be noted that Sophie's numerous near-death experiences, as well as certain incidents involving the Council, have often hindered her attendance at Foxfire and forced her to miss key exams.

ACCIDENT-PRONE:

While living with humans, Sophie was hospitalized at least twice—once when she was five human years old, after she fell and hit her head (which was also when Mr. Forkle triggered her telepathy), and once when she was nine human years old, after a severe allergic reaction to something the doctors could never identify. (The substance was later identified as limbium, which was given to her by the Black Swan.) And since arriving in the Lost Cities, Sophie

has set a record for injuries, many of which were nearly fatal—though most can't be considered her fault, since they were the direct result of attacks by the Neverseen. See Sophie's medical record for more specifics.

A GIFT WITH ALICORNS:

Sophie's unique telepathy allowed her to track the thoughts of what turned out to be an incredibly rare female alicorn—the only creature capable of resetting the Timeline to Extinction—and bring her safely to Havenfield. And since Sophie could communicate with the creature (the alicorn even informed Sophie that her name is Silveny), the Council opted to leave her in Sophie's care, which allowed Sophie to discover Silveny's ability to teleport. Unfortunately, Sophie also followed the Black Swan's instructions and took Silveny to one of the Black Swan's hideouts, where the Neverseen managed to track them down and stage an ambush. Silveny's wing was broken during the attack, but Sophie used her teleporting to get herself, Keefe Sencen, and Silveny safely back to Havenfield. And Silveny's injury did heal completely, much to everyone's relief. Afterward, Sophie convinced Silveny to move to the Sanctuary, both for Silveny's protection and to unite her with the male of her species (Greyfell). And Sophie discovered soon after that she was able to remain in contact with Silveny telepathically, despite the distance between them—which turned out to be a very good thing. The Neverseen tried numerous times to steal both alicorns from the Sanctuary, and when Sophie learned that Silveny was pregnant (which would surely make the Neverseen even *more* desperate to capture her), she convinced

the Council that it would be safer to set the alicorns free so that no one would know where they were. She promised to maintain regular contact with Silveny and Greyfell and provide detailed reports on their safety and wellness—though Silveny made that promise difficult for Sophie to keep. She started ignoring Sophie when she reached out to her telepathically and refused to come to Havenfield for any medical checkups, all of which turned out to be some sort of protective instinct related to the fact that Silveny was pregnant with twins. But she did call on Sophie for help when she went into labor early. And Sophie relied on Vika and Stina Heks—as well as the trolls—to save both babies (a male named Wynn and a female named Luna) and ensure that Silveny survived the delivery. The alicorn family currently lives at Havenfield but is free to go whenever and wherever they want. Sophie remains their point of contact.

A MAGNET FOR TROUBLE:

Since Sophie's arrival in the Lost Cities, she has had numerous—occasionally heated—interactions with the Council. She was tested by a committee of three (Councillor Oralie, Councillor Bronte, and Councillor Kenric) and granted provisional attendance to Foxfire—which she nearly lost due to poor performance in several of her sessions. But as of now, she maintains her standing at our prestigious academy. She has also faced Tribunals for accidentally bottling quintessence—and bringing the dangerous substance to school—as well as for illegally leaping to the human world to bottle a sample of their firestorm in order to prove the flames were Everblaze (a charge she was sentenced to

“time already served” in light of her kidnapping). Several members of the Council also suspect that she has possession of an unregistered Spyball, but no proof has been found to support these theories. After her abilities were reset, Sophie requested permission from the Council to attempt a “healing” on Alden Vacker’s shattered mind, which turned out to be wonderfully successful. As a result, she was ordered to perform a healing on a former Councillor (Fintan Pyren) in the hope that she would be able to retrieve the secrets he’d protected during his memory break. Unfortunately, that healing resulted in Councillor Kenric’s death and Fintan’s escape, along with an inferno of Everblaze that destroyed half of Eternalia. And while Sophie was at Kenric’s planting, she attempted to read King Dimitar’s mind (she evidently considered him to be suspicious) and was nearly dragged away to an ogre work camp for violating the elvin-ogre treaty. But final punishment was left up to the Council, and the Councillors voted to constrain her abilities with a prototype “ability restrictor” designed by Dex Dizznee instead. The gadget appeared to cause Sophie some discomfort, but it also succeeded in limiting her power. And Sophie cooperated with the punishment—until she “lost” the ability restrictor through suspicious circumstances, right before illegally teleporting to the human world. She—and all of her friends—fled the Lost Cities not long after, hiding with the Black Swan until they were captured while attempting to liberate Prentice Endal from Exile. During the confrontation, Sophie revealed her possession of Councillor Kenric’s cache and bartered a deal for her and her friends’ freedom by agreeing to formal banishment and attendance at Exillium. Her group’s role

in finding a cure for the gnomish plague restored their citizenship and admission to Foxfire. Sophie also convinced the Council to free Prentice from Exile and performed a healing on Prentice's mind—but she was unable to recover any of his memories. She was also selected to participate in the ogre treaty renegotiations at Lumenaria, and her warnings during the Neverseen's attack on the castle saved numerous lives, including the Councillors'. Despite that, her relationship with the Council has remained tenuous. Sophie often questions their authority and refuses to play by their rules—particularly after her human parents were captured by Vespera. Miss Foster's desperate rescue led to the discovery of one of the Lost Cities' more dangerous secrets, and she continues to advocate for that information to be made public, despite the chaos that would likely ensue. She and her friends have also become the “faces” of the revolution, both for saving Atlantis from flooding, and because they were broadcast standing up to the Neverseen during the troll attack that occurred at the most recent Celestial Festival. In light of Sophie's growing support, the Council elected to begin working with her and appointed Sophie and several of her friends as Regents in the nobility, forming Team Valiant, which Sophie was assigned to lead. The team was sent to Loamnore to negotiate with King Enki, to mixed results—though King Enki has since been outed as a traitor, so it's possible the lack of success was not Team Valiant's fault. As of this writing, the Council remains committed to the project, but only time will tell if it will find true success, or whether Sophie will fall back into her ways of disobedience and rebellion and finally end up exiled.

DECEASED BUT NOT DEAD:

Sophie was kidnapped by the Neverseen, along with her best friend (Dex Dizznee). But their disappearance at first seemed to be a tragic accident. Evidence at their last known location, as well as the recovery of their registry pendants from the bottom of the ocean, led the Council to believe that both Sophie and Dex had been washed away by a tidal wave. With no evidence to suggest any alternative, both Sophie and Dex were declared “deceased.” Plantings were held, and their Wanderlings remain in the Wanderling Woods to this day, since it would be wrong to destroy innocent trees simply because they were planted prematurely.

AN ABUNDANCE OF BODYGUARDS:

After Sophie escaped from her kidnappers and returned to the Lost Cities, the Council reached out to Queen Hylda and requested that she supply Sophie with a goblin for protection. Queen Hylda complied, assigning one of her best warriors (Sandor) to serve as Sophie’s bodyguard—and he takes his job *very* seriously. Sandor’s motto appears to be “I go where you go,” and he does his best to never leave Sophie’s side. He’s also reportedly hidden trackers in her clothes in case she’s ever abducted again—or tries to sneak away. And while Sophie doesn’t always appreciate being shadowed by an overprotective, seven-foot-tall goblin (particularly since so many of her “investigations” into the Neverseen require a hefty amount of risk), she and Sandor have still managed to form a unique friendship. In fact, when Sandor considered resigning after what he viewed as “failing Sophie” during one of the Neverseen’s recent brutal attacks, Sophie begged him to stay and even agreed

to adding additional bodyguards to her detail to make Sandor feel more confident about her level of protection. Sandor in turn surprised everyone by opting for a multispeciesial approach, which is how Sophie ended up with an ogre bodyguard (Botros), a gnomish bodyguard (Flori), a dwarven bodyguard (Nubiti), and a trollish bodyguard (Tarina). (Because of certain dramatics in the trollish and dwarven worlds—as well as one of Sophie’s friends needing a bodyguard—her detail is currently reduced to only Sandor and Flori.) It was quite the spectacle when her full group of protectors was gathered, and almost inspiring in a way. Proof that our world could be so much stronger if all the intelligent species truly found a way to work together.

NEXUS AND REGISTRY PENDANT EVENTS:

Sophie was given Fitz Vacker’s old nexus when she was first brought to the Lost Cities, and she kept it as her primary nexus until it was stolen during her kidnapping—which was also when her first registry pendant was removed by the Neverseen (in a somewhat successful attempt to “fake” her death). Upon her escape and recovery, Sophie was given an updated registry pendant with heightened security measures to prevent tampering or removal—though Alden Vacker managed to cut it off before Sophie fled the Lost Cities to join the Black Swan. She was issued a third pendant when the Council lifted her banishment, and that one seems to have lasted (but sometimes the feed appears to get interrupted). Della Vacker also gave Sophie a new nexus after her kidnapping, which Sophie was ordered to wear despite how strong her concentration had gotten, as a precaution after Sophie

nearly faded away. Additional leaping problems resulted in Sophie being given a second nexus to wear on her other wrist, but neither turned out to be necessary once her abilities were reset. Alden Vacker removed both before Sophie joined the Black Swan, to prevent anyone from tracking her location.

UNMATCHABLE:

If school gossip is to be believed, then Sophie has “liked” or dated (or may currently be dating) a number of different prodigies—but none of that has been confirmed. What *has* been confirmed is that Sophie has attempted to register for the match (according to a report from the Matchmaking Office), and the system has denied her request. Without record of her genetic lineage, she cannot be safely matched, as there is far too great of a risk that she could be paired with a biological relative. And a second investigation into her genetic parents’ identities (in addition to one performed when Sophie first arrived in the Lost Cities) has been recently completed by the Council—and turned up nothing. So unless Sophie’s biological parents come forward—or she discovers their identities on her own—her status will remain unmatchable.

THE “FOSTER OBLIVION”:

Admittedly, there is little actual fact to report on this subject—but given how often the term is used (particularly by Keefe Sencen’s ogre bodyguard), it seemed necessary to include a brief mention. Theories suggest that what the phrase means to imply is a certain lack of understanding on Sophie’s part when it comes to